Traps and Snares - Tangle, Dangle, Strangle or Mangle

In most survival situations, food is not an essential. You can live only a few days without water, but you can live for weeks without food. The energy used to find and hunt for food can also burn more calories than they give back. But, if you have plenty of water, are not sick or injured, and your camp is set up, you can spend some time looking for food. There are many edible plants, but many are also poisonous. You need to know you can identify edible plants before eating any of them. Streams my provide fish or crayfish. You can use worms, grubs or insects as bait, or eat them if needed. This article is about snares and traps, but they require some expertise, practice and skill to use successfully.

With most small game it is easier to trap than to stalk and kill, in a survival situation setting traps also leaves you with time to attend to other duties like foraging or shelter building. The title of this page represents the principals of trapping, your trap must effect to either tangle, dangle, strangle or mangle your quarry. Putting up several traps around your shelter/retreat gives you more than one opportunity at a time to catch a meal, check all traps regularly to prevent escape and undue suffering. Starting a routine of regularly doing the rounds of your traps will provide you with a positive activity, however BE PATIENT, you will need to study the habits of animals to site traps effectively more intelligent creatures will initially be wary of anything new but will quickly come to accept the presence of traps.....That's when they walk into them!

Disclaimer: Traps are presented for information purposes only, they are dangerous, some lethally so. Using them is also illegal in all likelihood. Don't use them except in a survival situation. It's not big and it's not clever and I won't accept any responsibility for you getting your wrists smacked, or anything else.

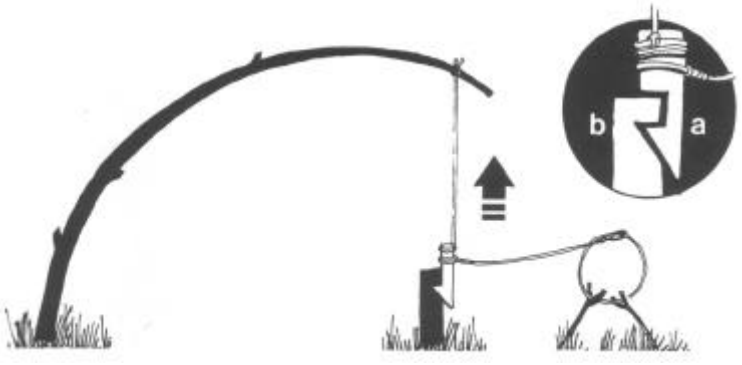
Note: The survivor's own preservation must take precedence over humanitarian principles and unfortunately some of the easiest traps can cause considerable suffering to the animal. Regular checking is essential as leaving traps unchecked can prolong an animal's pain and increase the risk that your catch may be taken by an animal predator or that the prey will have managed painfully to struggle free.

TRAP CONSTRUCTION: The simpler traps and snares are made of string or wire. Triggers are made out of available wood. The choice of materials is important. Use strong, springy wood. Do not use dead wood or wood found on the ground. Hide freshly cut ends of wood with mud. Don't tread on the game trail. Do all your preparation off the trail and don't leave any sign that you've been there.

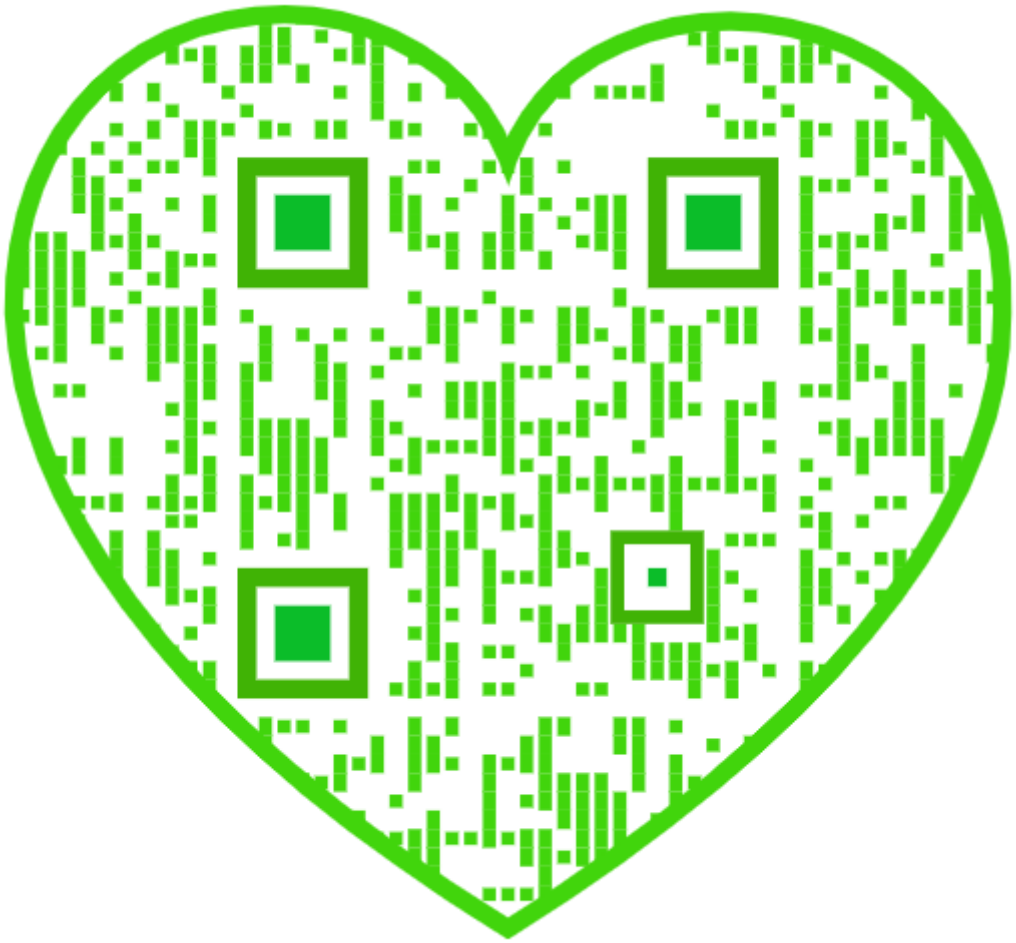
A wire snare can be supported off the ground on twigs, which can also be used to keep a suspended string noose open.

A Snare is a free-running noose that can catch small game around the throat and larger game around the legs. For rabbits and small animals, make a loop a fist width in length. Set it four fingers above the ground and one hand's width from an obstruction on the trail. Check that it is securely anchored, with twigs to support the loop in position if necessary.

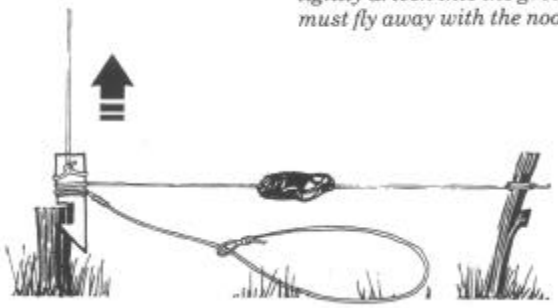
Cut notch in trigger bar (a) to fit notch in upright (b). Drive upright into ground. Attach snare to trigger bar and use cord to sapling to keep tension.



SPRING SNARE:- Game running through the snare disengages the trigger bar, and the prey is flung off the ground. Use on game trails or in gaps through rocks or hedges. Cut a notch in triggerbar (a) to fit upright (b). Drive upright into ground. Attach snare to trigger bar, then trigger bar to sapling.



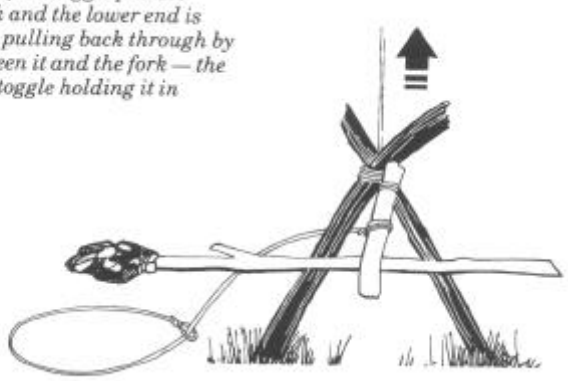
The bait support stake should be only lightly driven into the ground as this must fly away with the noose.

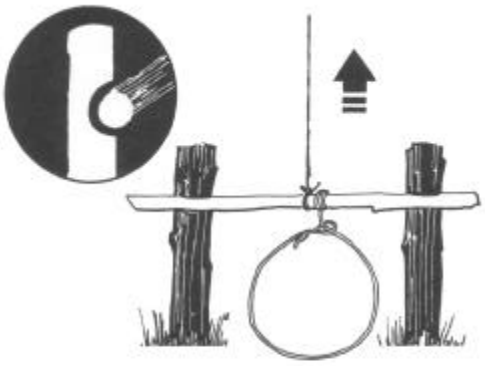


LEG SNARE :- Push a natural fork or two sticks tied together into the ground. The line from a sapling is tied to a wooden toggle and the toggle passed under the fork. When the game takes the bait, attached to a separate stick, it falls away releasing the toggle that flies up taking the snare and the game with it. Large versions are amongst the best snares or heavy game.

BAITED SNARE:- Construct as for spring snare but using the release mechanism shown. The bait support should be only lightly driven into the ground as it must fly away with the snare.

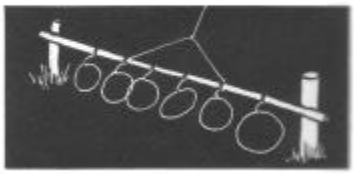
The upper end of the toggle presses against the fork and the lower end is prevented from pulling back through by a bait bar between it and the fork — the pressure of the toggle holding it in position.



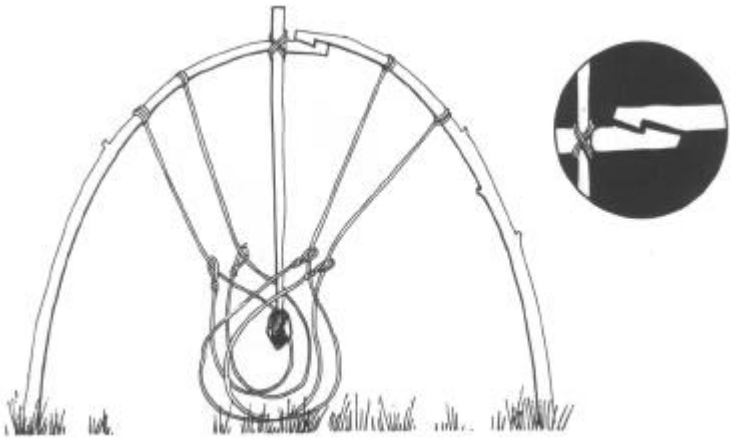


ROLLER SPRING SNARE:- A rounded grip holds the snare arm here, the switch line is best pulled back at a slight angle to keep it in place. Suitable for animals such as rabbits and foxes. Although tensed in one direction, the bar will be dislodged by an animal's struggles.

A wide area can be covered by employing several snares on a long horizontal bar. Use where the game trail widens or offers options.



DOUBLE SPRING SNARE:- Two saplings are notched to interlock when bent towards each other over the game trail. A vertical bait bar is lashed near the end of one of them. Two snares can be attached to each sapling, they need to be fairly stiff to hold their positions. This trap is useful in clearings to catch small carnivores. When the bait is taken the game is help in the air between the saplings.



DEADFALL TRAPS: These traps all work on the principle that when the bait is taken a weight falls on the prey. All are good for game such as pigs, foxes, and rodents. Larger versions can be used for bigger animals such as dear and bears. **WARNING! The large versions of these deadfall traps can be extremely dangerous for humans as well as for the prey for which they are intended. The toggle release and deadfall traps can easily be set off accidentally. Even in survival situations ensure that everyone knows exactly where they are. In survival practice keep people away from them and never leave such a trap set up at the end of an exercise.** You cannot set a large deadfall trap on your own. Keep the mechanism to the side of the trail, well away from the dropping weight, or setting it will be too risky. Balance is critical, and you are unlikely to get it right the first time.

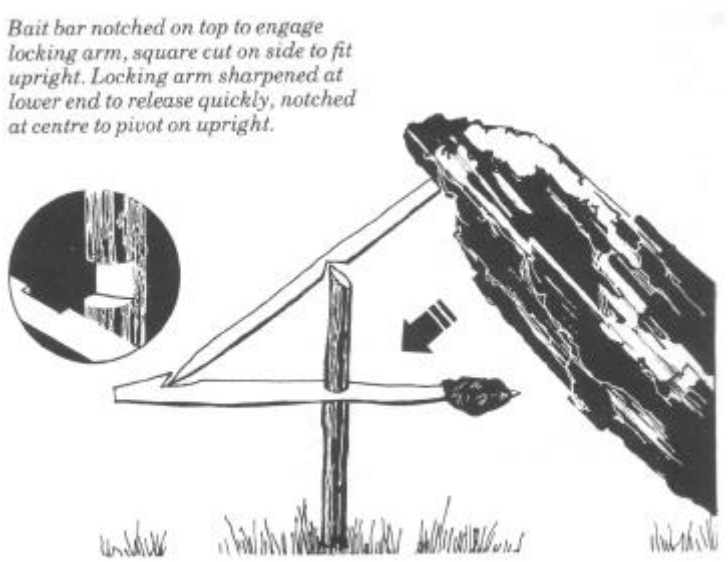
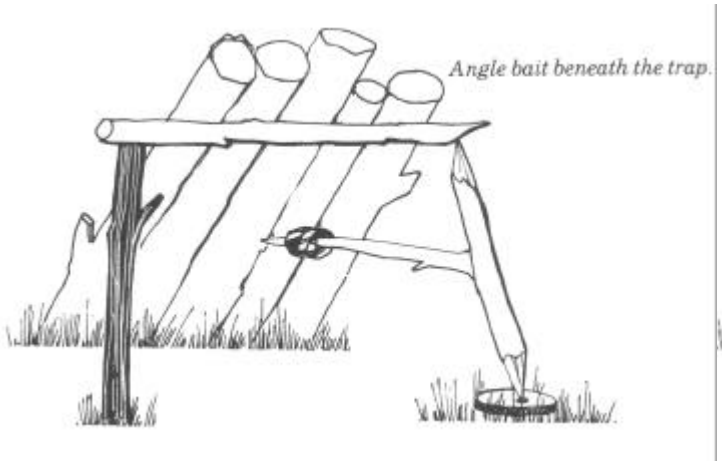
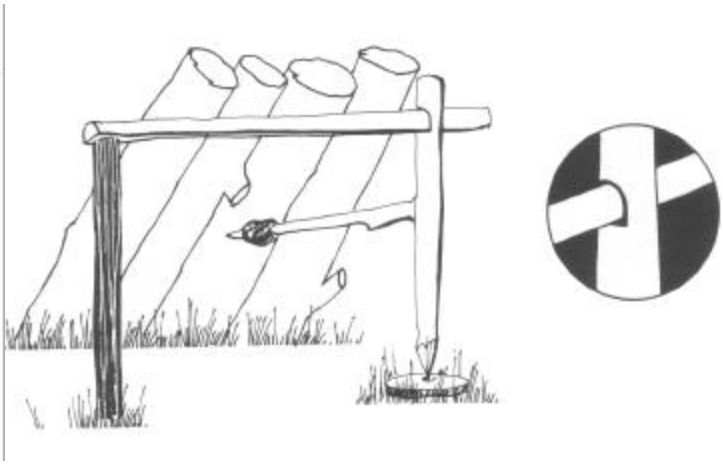

Bait bar notched on top to engage locking arm, square cut on side to fit upright. Locking arm sharpened at lower end to release quickly, notched at centre to pivot on upright.

FIGURE 4 DEADFALL :- A simple and effective deadfall trap, can be made to any size. A horizontal bait bar is balanced at right angles to an upright with a lock bar, which supports a rock or other heavy weight pivoting around the tip of the upright.

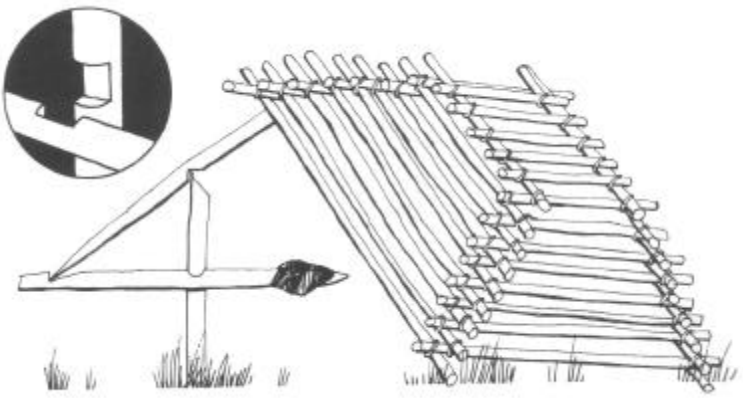
BALANCE LOG & SQUARE-FACE RELEASE TRAP:- The balance log is a forked stick, it's ends sharpened to dislodge rapidly and one fork suitably baited, supports one end of a cross-bar, the other end of which rests on a fixed support, held there by the weight of the heavy logs or rock which rest on the bar. The Square-Face Release Trap is similar, but uses a notched upright as the support, the lower face of the notch squared off. Fit the cross-bar against the squared-off lower face of the bar supporting the weight.





NOOSE STICK:- To catch birds or squirrels, tie many fine nooses close together along a stick or branch. Do not remove the animal as soon as one is caught. It will attract other birds and squirrels and soon you will have several

FIGURE 4 TRAP:- This mechanism (See Figure 4 Deadfall) can be used with a 'log cabin' type cage, made from a pyramid of sticks tied together, which is balanced over the bait. Scatter bait around and under the cage.

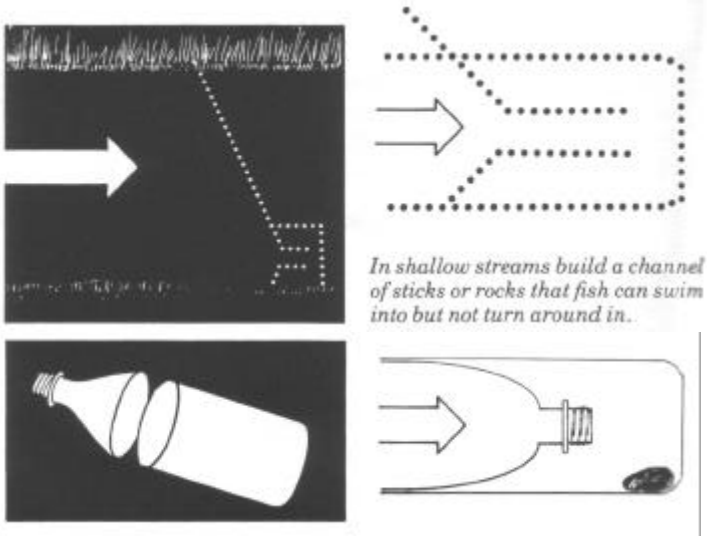


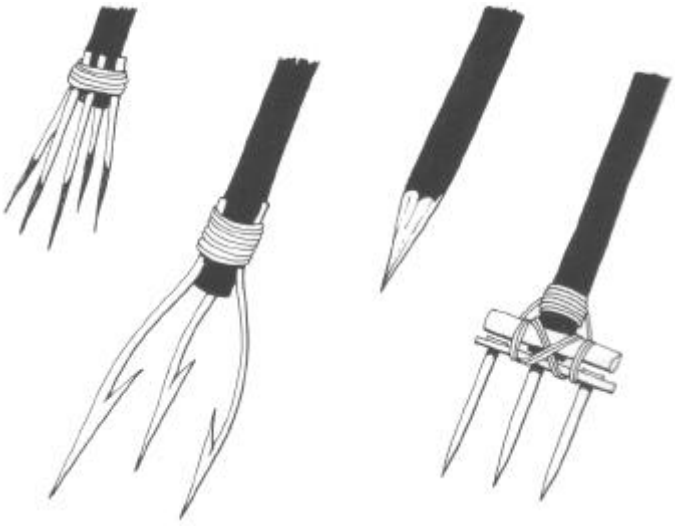
RUNNING NOOSE:- A noose attached to a long pole is an effective way of pulling roosting birds down from lower branches. Sneak up in nights where there is sufficient light to see them. Slip the noose over the bird and pull, tightening the noose and pulling the bird down at the same time.

FISH AND FISHING: Fish are a valuable food source, containing protein, vitamins and fats. All freshwater fish are edible, but some tropical ones can be dangerous. Leave any lines out overnight and check on them before first light. Fishing with a hook and line is the best way of fishing and should be a part of your survival kit. Hooks can be improvised from wire, pins, bones, wood and even thorns.

Bait native to the fishes' own water is most likely to be taken: berries that overhang it, insects that breed in and near it, parts of a fish, ants, worms, grubs, and other insects. Once you catch a fish, examine its stomach contents to see what it has been feeding on. I also add a few tied flies to my kit to use as well.

FISH TRAPS:- You can make a wide variety of traps from ones across an entire stream to drive fish into, to bottle traps to catch small fish in. (Arrows indicate current.) If you have a plastic bottle you can make an efficient trap for small fish by cutting it off just below the neck and then inverting the neck inside the bottle. Fish swim in but cannot find their way out again. Bait the trap to entice them in. You may also need to weight it down so it doesn't float away.





SPEARING:- Sharpen a long stick to make a spear, adding barbs to make it more effective. If you have multiple points, you give yourself a wider margin of error since it covers a larger area. Try to get above the fish and strike down swiftly. Make sure that you are not casting a shadow over the fish you are trying to catch. Aim slightly below the fish to allow for refraction of its image at the surface.